

MACAULAY'S CHARACTER OF JAMES II

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meane thing it would be in me, besides the sin
of it, to dis-
semble, and deny my religion, I have ~?
resolved] by God's
grace never to do so damnable a thing/¹ That
he would
hear of no compromise on this question is
greatly to his
credit.

These letters prove that James was despotic
and a firm
believer in the theory of the divine right of
kings. He was
evidently unable to understand any of the
conditions of
constitutional government, or to appreciate the
necessity of
the smallest concession. His father had yielded
to the de-
mands of the Parliamentarians and had been
beheaded;²
he meant to crush discontent, not to try to
remove its causes,
The exclusion bill, wrote James, ^f was against
law, and
destroys the very being of the monarchy, which, I
thanke God,
yett has had no dependency on Parliments nor
on nothing
but God alone, nor never can, and be a
monarchy; and I
hope his Majesty will be of this mind, and
never lett this
House of Commons sitt againe. If he dos, he is
ruined for
ever.¹³

James expressed these autocratic ideas of
kingship with
monotonous regularity in his correspondence,
and regarded
all who did not accept them as traitors. IE
every line, his
inferiority to Charles II in political ability and
worldly
wisdom is apparent* Charles weathered the
storm raised
by the Popish Plot by giving his opponents
rope enough;

James thought his brother was surrendering
the essence of
monarchy. After the dissolution of the Oxford
Parliament
and the arrest of Shaftesbury the Whigs were
paralysed,
and James urged his brother ' to follow the
blow now that
they were stunn'd, as the only way to master a
faction which

¹Dec. ii, 1680. Dartmouth MSS., i. 40 ; cf. The Life
of James the
Second, ed. J. S. Clarke (2 vols.; 1816), i. 560.
- Macaulay, II, 718-9 (vi) ; cf. II, 1019 (viii).
²July 6, 1679, Savile Foljambe MSS., pp. 133-4 ;
Dalrymple. i.: 224.